

INFLUENCER MARKETING GUIDE: PLATFORMS, BEST CONTENT STRATEGIES, AND TARGET MARKETS*

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This study complies with research and publication ethics.

Abstract

Influencer marketing has emerged as a central strategy in digital advertising, enabling brands to leverage social media influencers to enhance audience engagement and brand awareness. This study examines the effectiveness of influencer marketing across six major platforms: *TikTok*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *X* (formerly *Twitter*), *LinkedIn*, and *YouTube*. The study employs a qualitative research approach to present the findings in three core dimensions: Influencer Types and Performance, Content Strategy, Marketing Advantages, and Challenges. Key findings demonstrate that campaign effectiveness is highly dependent on the strategic alignment of influencer types and content formats with each platform's technical affordances and audience culture. *TikTok* and *Instagram* are particularly effective for high-engagement, short-form content, making them optimal for viral campaigns and rapid audience growth. *LinkedIn* and *YouTube* excel in supporting long-form, educational, and thought leadership content, fostering professional credibility and sustained audience retention. *Facebook* remains significant for community-driven engagement and interactive formats such as live shopping. *X* distinguishes itself with real-time interaction and thought leadership, especially in trending and niche communities. The study highlights that nano- and micro-influencers outperform macro-influencers on platforms that prioritise authenticity and community. Macro and thought leadership influencers are more impactful in rewarding expertise and depth. The growing presence of AI-generated and meme influencers on visually and algorithmically driven platforms points to new directions for digital marketing. This research provides actionable insights for brands and marketers seeking to improve their digital engagement, offering a structured framework for influencer marketing strategies. By clarifying the interplay between influencer type, content strategy, and platform affordance, the study supports more effective, evidence-based influencer marketing campaigns. Future research should explore the evolving role of AI-generated influencers and the impact of emerging digital platforms on influencer marketing strategies.

Keywords: influencer marketing, social media platforms, digital advertising, content strategy, audience engagement.

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'INFLUENCER' PAZARLAMA REHBERİ: PLATFORMLAR, EN İYİ İÇERİK STRATEJİLERİ VE HEDEF PAZARLAR*

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Bu çalışma araştırma ve yayın etiğine uygun olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Öz

Influencer pazarlama, dijital reklamcılığın merkezi bir stratejisi haline gelerek markaların sosyal medya fenomenlerini kullanarak hedef kitle etkileşimini ve marka bilinirliğini artırmasına olanak sağlamıştır. Bu çalışma, influencer pazarlamanın etkinliğini *TikTok*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *X* (eski adıyla *Twitter*), *LinkedIn* ve *YouTube* olmak üzere altı ana platformda incelemektedir. Bulgular, nitel bir araştırma yaklaşımı ile üç temel boyutta sunulmuştur: Influencer Türleri ve Performansı, İçerik Stratejisi ve Pazarlama Avantajları ve Zorlukları. Elde edilen ana bulgular, kampanya etkinliğinin büyük ölçüde influencer türlerinin ve içerik formatlarının, her bir platformun teknik olanakları ve kullanıcı kültürüyle stratejik uyumuna bağlı olduğunu göstermektedir. *TikTok* ve *Instagram*, yüksek etkileşimli kısa video içeriklerinde öne çıkarak viral kampanyalar ve hızlı kitle büyümesi için en uygun ortamı sunar. *LinkedIn* ve *YouTube* ise uzun formatlı, eğitici ve düşünce liderliğine dayalı içerikleri destekleyerek profesyonel itibar ve sürdürülebilir izleyici bağlılığı sağlamada başarılıdır. *Facebook*, topluluk odaklı etkileşim ve canlı alışveriş gibi interaktif formatlarla önemini korumaktadır. *X* ise özellikle güncel ve niş topluluklarda, gerçek zamanlı etkileşim ve düşünce liderliği ile öne çıkar. Çalışma, özgünlük ve topluluk odaklılık öncelikli platformlarda nano ve mikro 'influencer'ların makro 'influencer'lara kıyasla daha yüksek performans gösterdiğini; uzmanlık ve derinlik ödüllendirildiğinde ise makro ve düşünce lideri 'influencer'ların daha etkili olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Görsel ve algoritmik olarak yönlendirilen platformlarda yapay zekâ destekli ve meme 'influencer'ların yükselen varlığı, dijital pazarlama için yeni yönelimleri işaret etmektedir. Bu araştırma, dijital etkileşimi artırmak isteyen marka ve pazarlamacılara uygulanabilir içgörüler sunarak influencer pazarlama stratejileri için yapılandırılmış bir çerçeve ortaya koymaktadır. Influencer türü, içerik stratejisi ve platform olanakları arasındaki etkileşimi netleştirerek daha etkili ve kanıta dayalı influencer kampanyalarını desteklemektedir. Gelecek araştırmaların, yapay zekâ ile üretilen 'influencer'ların değişen rolünü ve yeni dijital platformların influencer pazarlamasına etkisini incelemesi önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: influencer pazarlama, sosyal medya platformları, dijital reklamcılık, içerik stratejisi, hedef kitle etkileşimi.

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Introduction

Background and context

Influencer marketing has become a dominant force in digital advertising, leveraging the credibility and reach of social media personalities to promote brands, products, and services (Voorveld, 2019). With the continuous expansion of digital platforms, businesses increasingly integrate influencer collaborations into their marketing strategies to engage with highly targeted audiences (Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2022). Unlike traditional advertising, influencer marketing builds on trust, authenticity, and audience engagement, making it an effective approach for brand advocacy and customer acquisition (Bunker, 2020; Kim & Kim, 2021).

The rapid growth of social media has led to the emergence of diverse influencer types across various platforms. Social networks, including *TikTok*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *X* (formerly *Twitter*), *LinkedIn*, and *YouTube*, offer unique opportunities for brands to connect with consumers (Haenlein et al., 2020). However, the effectiveness of influencer marketing varies significantly based on platform dynamics, content formats, and audience demographics (Hugh et al., 2022). Selecting the right influencer type and content strategy is crucial for maximising engagement, conversion rates, and brand impact (Leung et al., 2022).

Despite its advantages, influencer marketing presents challenges, including algorithm-driven visibility shifts, content saturation, and concerns about authenticity (Kapitan et al., 2022). Additionally, brands must navigate platform-specific audience behaviours, influencer pricing structures, and evolving engagement trends (Ao et al., 2023). A data-driven approach is essential for optimising influencer selection and developing tailored marketing strategies.

This study aims to provide a structured framework for influencer marketing by analysing the most effective influencer types, content formats, and audience engagement patterns across various social media platforms, including *TikTok*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *X* (formerly *Twitter*), *LinkedIn*, and *YouTube*. This analysis provides actionable insights for businesses and marketers seeking to refine their influencer marketing strategies.

Methodology

Research questions

Reflecting the increasingly diverse, dynamic, and platform-specific nature of influencer marketing, this study formulates a set of research questions to guide its comparative and strategic analysis. These questions aim to capture the nuances of influencer performance, content strategies, marketing advantages and challenges, and cross-platform alignment, providing a structured lens to interpret the findings. Accordingly, the study seeks to address the fol-

lowing research questions (R.Q.):

R.Q.1: What types of influencers (e.g., nano, micro, macro, AI-generated, and thought leaders) are most effective on each major social media platform, and how do their performance patterns vary?

R.Q.2: Which content formats and strategies (short-form, long-form, interactive, live, AI-based) yield the highest engagement and marketing effectiveness on *TikTok*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *X (Twitter)*, *LinkedIn*, and *YouTube*?

R.Q.3: What are the platform-specific marketing advantages and challenges in utilizing influencer collaborations, particularly in audience targeting, brand trust, content visibility, and campaign sustainability?

R.Q.4: How do the platforms compare overall influencer marketing effectiveness across critical dimensions such as short-form engagement, long-form thought leadership, community-based impact, and AI/virtual integration?

R.Q.5: How can marketers strategically align influencer types and content strategies with each platform's affordances and user cultures to optimize campaign outcomes and brand impact?

Purpose and rationale of the study

The rapid expansion and diversification of influencer marketing across digital platforms have fundamentally transformed how brands communicate, build trust, and engage with target audiences. However, academic literature often lacks comparative, theory-driven analyses that systematically examine how influencer types, content strategies, and platform-specific affordances interact to shape marketing effectiveness across different ecosystems. There is a critical need for research that not only identifies effective influencer types and content strategies for each platform but also explains why and how these differences emerge in practice, integrating both conceptual and empirical perspectives.

Accordingly, the primary objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive and comparative analysis of influencer marketing strategies across six major social media platforms: *TikTok*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter* (formerly *X*), *LinkedIn*, and *YouTube*. The research aims to (1) systematically categorise influencer types based on their roles, performance patterns, and engagement metrics on each platform, (2) evaluate the effectiveness of diverse content formats and strategies in driving marketing outcomes, (3) identify the unique advantages and challenges associated with influencer collaborations in different digital environments, (4) synthesize these findings into a cross-platform framework that enables marketers and researchers to align campaign strategies with platform affordances and audience expectations, and (5) contribute to the theoretical understanding of influencer marketing by articulating the

underlying mechanisms -such as trust, authenticity, community-building, and algorithmic logic- that drive influencer effectiveness. By pursuing these goals, the study directly responds to recent calls in the literature for more holistic, context-sensitive, and practically relevant analyses of influencer marketing dynamics.

Significance and contribution

This study makes several original contributions to both academic scholarship and professional practice. By employing a qualitative, comparative thematic analysis that integrates multiple data sources and research questions, it offers a data-driven yet theory-informed understanding of how influencer marketing operates across the most influential digital platforms. The cross-platform perspective offers a nuanced map of how influencer types (nano, micro, macro, AI-generated, meme, thought leadership, etc.) and content formats (short-form, long-form, interactive, live, educational) achieve varying impacts depending on the sociotechnical context. The findings provide actionable guidance for marketers and brands seeking to optimise influencer selection, content design, and campaign strategy in a rapidly fragmenting digital ecosystem. The study's practical matrix and comparative visual synthesis serve as strategic tools for practitioners, helping them navigate platform-specific strengths and limitations, audience preferences, and emerging trends such as AI-generated influencers and virtual communities. The research advances theoretical debates in digital marketing by situating influencer performance within broader frameworks of trust, engagement, authenticity, and platform governance. By highlighting both expected and unexpected findings – including the growing influence of AI-generated actors and the enduring impact of community-driven advocacy – the study encourages future research to address the evolving challenges and opportunities in influencer marketing. Finally, by acknowledging methodological limitations and suggesting directions for empirical and primary research, the study supports ongoing knowledge development and evidence-based decision-making in both academia and the marketing industry.

Research design and approach

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, adopting an exploratory and comparative thematic analysis to examine influencer marketing strategies across six major social media platforms: *TikTok*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *X* (formerly *Twitter*), *LinkedIn*, and *YouTube*. The qualitative approach allows for a nuanced exploration of platform-specific influencer dynamics, content strategies, and audience alignment, yielding rich contextual insights into digital marketing practices.

Data collection and sources

The analysis was based exclusively on secondary data, drawing from a wide range of peer-reviewed academic studies published over the last two decades. Sources were identified through a structured literature review using *Web of Science*, *Scopus*, and *Google Scholar* databases. The inclusion criteria prioritised credibility, recency, and direct relevance to influencer marketing practices, platform-specific engagement strategies, and content effectiveness. The source selection process aimed to ensure comprehensive and representative coverage of influencer marketing across the target platforms.

Thematic analysis and coding procedure

Thematic analysis was conducted by systematically reviewing and coding the selected sources to identify recurring patterns and emerging trends in influencer marketing. The study employed both deductive and inductive coding strategies. Research questions and predefined categories guided deductive coding, while inductive coding enabled the identification of novel themes and context-specific dynamics. For each platform, this study organised the coding and analysis under three main thematic dimensions: "Influencer Types and Performance," "Content Strategy," and "Marketing Advantages & Challenges." This structure ensured that platform-specific findings were consistently mapped and compared across all cases. Themes were refined and clearly defined to capture the complexity of influencer-platform alignment, content effectiveness, and marketing challenges. The final analysis presents the detailed findings for each platform, followed by a comparative synthesis across platforms.

Researcher role, validity, and reliability

To enhance the validity and reliability of the study, several measures were adopted throughout the research process. Triangulation was achieved by integrating data from multiple academic sources, thereby reducing the risk of bias from every source. The transparency of the study was ensured by documenting the coding framework and theme definitions in detail, thereby enabling the replicability of the analysis. The researcher's background and prior experience in digital marketing and influencer research were acknowledged as potential sources of interpretive bias. To reduce this risk, the researcher regularly wrote self-reflective notes during the analysis process, critically examining assumptions and perspectives to minimise personal bias and maintain objectivity.

Findings

'TikTok'

TikTok has rapidly become one of the most influential social media platforms for digital marketing, particularly among younger demographics. The platform's algorithm prioritizes short-form video content with high engagement potential, making it an ideal space for influencer-driven campaigns (Hae-nlein et al., 2020).

Influencer types and performance

Nano and micro-influencers thrive on *TikTok* due to their ability to create highly engaging, community-driven content (Chan et al., 2023). Their relatability and authenticity resonate with niche audiences, fostering trust and higher engagement rates. Macro influencers, while reaching broader audiences, often experience lower engagement compared to micro-influencers, making them more suitable for brand awareness campaigns rather than direct audience interaction. Meme influencers leverage *TikTok*'s algorithm, which favours humour and viral trends, enabling them to achieve significant reach and rapid content distribution (M. Zhang & Liu, 2021). The rise of live shopping influencers on *TikTok* has also redefined digital marketing, as real-time engagement and interactive product showcases drive consumer purchasing decisions.

Content strategy

Content strategies on *TikTok* revolve around the platform's unique format, emphasising creativity, trends, and engagement (Ishihara & Oktavianti, 2021). Trending challenges and duet features enable brands to capitalise on viral movements, increasing organic reach. Short-form video content that incorporates music, filters, and special effects aligns with *TikTok*'s entertainment-driven nature, making it highly engaging and appealing. Interactive content, such as live Q&A sessions and behind-the-scenes clips, enhances audience trust and fosters community-building among followers (Fonseca & Fonseca, 2023; Tong, 2020).

Marketing advantages and challenges

TikTok offers several advantages for influencer marketing, primarily its algorithm-driven content discovery, which provides a higher chance of virality compared to other platforms. The high engagement levels of nano and micro-influencers make collaborations cost-effective while ensuring impactful audience interactions (Lazo & Velasco, 2021). However, challenges persist, including rapid content turnover, which affects long-term visibility, and the unpredictability of the algorithm, making it difficult to achieve consistent reach. Additionally, regulatory concerns surrounding sponsored content disclosures require brands and influencers to navigate compliance requirements carefully (Arfan et al., 2023). Understanding these factors allows brands to refine their influencer marketing strategies on *TikTok*, leveraging platform-specific content dynamics to enhance engagement and conversion outcomes.

'Facebook'

Facebook remains a key platform for influencer marketing, particularly due to its diverse user demographics and strong community engagement tools (Arora et al., 2019). Unlike *TikTok*, *Facebook* allows for a mix of content types, including videos, live streams, and long-form posts, making it a versatile platform for brand promotions (Martínez-López et al., 2020).

Influencer types and performance

Macro and micro-influencers engage audiences through long-form content and interactive discussions, fostering meaningful connections. Their performance varies depending on the content type and audience engagement, making them effective for brand storytelling and product promotions (Chen et al., 2015). Live shopping influencers utilise *Facebook Live* to conduct real-time product showcases, resulting in high conversion rates through interactive demonstrations (Archer, 2019). Community-based influencers play a crucial role in brand advocacy by leveraging *Facebook Groups* to build loyal brand communities, fostering organic engagement, and promoting customer retention (Eghtesadi & Florea, 2020; Kupfer et al., 2018).

Content strategy

Content strategies on *Facebook* focus on real-time interaction and immersive storytelling. Live streams and Q&A sessions enhance audience relationships by creating direct engagement opportunities. Long-form posts and storytelling techniques, particularly in niche industries, enable brands to form a deep connection with their target market. Video content, including short clips and longer-format educational videos, performs well when optimised for *Facebook*'s native platform features (Gretzel, 2017; Hughes et al., 2019).

Marketing advantages and challenges

Facebook ensures strong community engagement through *Groups*, making it an excellent platform for brands seeking long-term audience connections (Litterio et al., 2017). Its suitability for long-form content and brand storytelling makes it ideal for businesses focused on detailed product education (Bianchi et al., 2017). However, the platform faces challenges such as declining organic reach due to algorithm shifts that favour paid advertising. Engagement rates tend to be lower than short-form video platforms like *TikTok*, and audience demographics skew older compared to newer social media channels. By strategically leveraging influencer collaborations on *Facebook*, brands can maximise customer engagement, increase conversion rates, and build long-term brand loyalty (Al-Emadi & Ben Yahia, 2020; Fink et al., 2020).

'Instagram'

Instagram remains one of the most effective platforms for influencer marketing, providing a highly visual medium for brands to engage with their audiences through photos, videos, and interactive content. The platform's diverse content formats, including *Stories*, *Reels*, and *IGTV*, enable influencers to tailor their content strategies to maximise engagement and conversions (Casaló et al., 2020).

Influencer types and performance

Nano and micro-influencers demonstrate high engagement rates on *Instagram*, often ranging between moderate to high levels, as their content is more personalised and fosters strong community trust (Boerman, 2020; Jin et al., 2019). Macro influencers provide extensive reach, but generally have slightly lower engagement rates than nano and micro-influencers, making them ideal for large-scale brand awareness campaigns (De Veirman et al., 2017). Meme influencers leverage *Instagram*'s shareability to generate viral content, while AI influencers, though an emerging trend, still require further empirical validation to assess their effectiveness. Live shopping influencers utilise *Instagram Live* for real-time shopping experiences, integrating interactive product showcases to drive conversions (Saffanah et al., 2023).

Content strategy

Its visually immersive nature shapes content strategies on *Instagram*. Reels and short-form videos are prioritised by the algorithm, making them essential for influencer marketing campaigns (Barquero Cabrero et al., 2023). Stories and interactive features, such as polls, Q&A sessions, and stickers, enhance audience participation and encourage immediate engagement. High-quality visual posts remain a cornerstone of brand storytelling, reinforcing credibility and long-term presence within target audiences (Chung et al., 2021).

Marketing advantages and challenges

Instagram offers a strong visual appeal, which enhances brand storytelling and product presentation. Interactive features, such as polls, Q&A, and stickers, drive engagement, while its versatile content formats allow brands to achieve multiple campaign objectives (Jin et al., 2019; Tafesse & Wood, 2021). However, the platform faces challenges such as declining organic reach due to algorithmic changes that prioritise paid promotions (De Veirman et al., 2019). High competition necessitates the consistent production of high-quality content, and influencer collaborations tend to be more costly compared to platforms like *TikTok* (Cotter, 2019). By leveraging *Instagram*'s strengths and strategically addressing its challenges, brands can create impactful influencer marketing campaigns that drive both engagement and conversions (Belanche et al., 2021).

'X (formerly Twitter)'

X (formerly *Twitter*) remains a vital platform for influencer marketing, particularly for thought leadership, brand announcements, and real-time engagement (Harrigan et al., 2021; Jhaver et al., 2021). The platform is unique in its ability to facilitate direct conversations between brands, influencers, and consumers through short-form content and trending discussions (Arora & Sanni, 2019).

Influencer types and performance

Micro and macro influencers dominate brand collaborations on X, with engagement levels varying based on content relevance and audience interaction (Almeida & Sabino, 2022; Leonardi et al., 2020). Micro-influencers often foster deeper engagement in niche discussions, while macro-influencers contribute to large-scale audience reach and brand visibility (Divecha, 2019). Blog and thought leadership influencers, including industry experts, journalists, and business leaders, leverage X to disseminate insights and industry trends, making them particularly influential in the technology, finance, and political sectors (Ali et al., 2020). Meme and community-based influencers thrive on the platform's fast-paced, shareable nature, often generating viral content that enhances audience engagement and organic reach (Kostygina et al., 2020).

Content strategy

Content strategies on X focus on maximising engagement through concise, interactive formats. Long-form tweet threads provide educational and informative value, particularly for thought leadership influencers (Dubois & Gaffney, 2014). Short-form video content, GIF's, and multimedia elements enhance user interaction and increase content shareability (Zengin Alp & Gündüz Ögüdücü, 2018). Hashtag campaigns and participation in trending discussions amplify brand visibility, allowing influencers to reach a broader audience through organic and algorithm-driven engagement (Xu & Zhou, 2020).

Marketing advantages and challenges

X offers several advantages for influencer marketing, including its high potential for virality through retweets and trending topics (Nguyen et al., 2016). The platform enables direct consumer engagement through replies, polls, and interactive discussions, making it particularly effective for real-time audience interaction (Catalina-García & Suárez-Álvarez, 2022). Additionally, X holds significant influence in industries such as technology, finance, and politics, where thought leadership plays a crucial role (Gómez et al., 2018).

However, challenges exist, including limited content longevity compared to platforms like *YouTube* or *Instagram*, where evergreen content generates sustained engagement (Germani & Biller-Andorno, 2021). Algorithm-driven visibility changes can make consistent audience reach unpredictable, necessitating frequent adjustments to brands' strategies. Additionally, the plat-

form's text-heavy nature may limit immersive brand storytelling opportunities compared to more visually driven platforms (Y. Zhang et al., 2017). By strategically utilizing influencer collaborations on X, brands can leverage real-time engagement, trend participation, and thought leadership to enhance their online presence and foster more meaningful interactions with their audience.

'LinkedIn'

LinkedIn is the premier social media platform for professional networking and B2B marketing, making it a key channel for influencer-driven thought leadership (Mora Cortez & Ghosh Dastidar, 2022). Unlike other platforms, *LinkedIn* influencers focus on industry expertise, career development, and business insights rather than entertainment-driven content (Budalakoti & Bekkerman, 2012).

Influencer types and performance

Macro and thought leadership influencers, including industry experts and corporate leaders, drive significant engagement through professional insights and educational content. These influencers establish credibility and provide value through industry analysis and business strategies (Chiang & Suen, 2015). Blog and educational influencers, who create long-form content such as case studies and research-based articles, achieve higher retention rates and authority, making them effective for knowledge-driven engagement (Neill et al., 2014). Nano and micro-influencers, often professionals with specialised expertise, engage small but highly relevant audiences, fostering strong community-driven interactions and niche discussions (Harshitha et al., 2021).

Content strategy

LinkedIn content strategies focus on thought leadership and professional discourse. Long-form articles and industry insights help influencers establish credibility and stimulate discussions within business circles (Ruso et al., 2022). Webinars and live sessions offer interactive opportunities for brands and professionals to engage in knowledge sharing and networking (Daniels & Dempsey, 2022). Engaging polls and industry trend discussions enhance participation, encouraging professionals to share their perspectives and contribute to industry-wide dialogues (Dong et al., 2015).

Marketing advantages and challenges

LinkedIn offers strong credibility and professional influence, making it a preferred platform for B2B marketing and corporate engagement. The platform's emphasis on thought leadership enhances the visibility of influencers who create high-quality, knowledge-driven content (Huang et al., 2019). Furthermore, *LinkedIn's* algorithm favours engagement-heavy posts, increasing visibility for influencers who generate meaningful discussions (Li et al., 2018).

However, challenges exist, including slower content virality compared to visually dynamic platforms like *Instagram* or *TikTok* (Hendijani Fard & Marvi, 2020). Effective engagement requires high-quality, expertise-driven content, making it more resource-intensive than other platforms (Suddaby et al., 2015). Additionally, organic reach is influenced by *LinkedIn*'s algorithm, which prioritises interaction and discussion over passive content consumption (Dusek et al., 2015). By strategically leveraging *LinkedIn* influencers, businesses can position themselves as thought leaders, enhance brand trust, and drive meaningful B2B engagement, ultimately strengthening their industry presence and professional influence.

'YouTube'

YouTube is one of the most impactful platforms for long-form content and influencer marketing, providing brands with opportunities for in-depth storytelling and product demonstrations (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The platform's strong search engine capabilities and content longevity make it an essential part of an influencer marketing strategy (Kim & Kim, 2022).

Influencer types and performance

Macro and vlogging influencers dominate *YouTube*, leveraging the platform's long-form content capabilities to produce tutorials, unboxing videos, and lifestyle vlogs (Gil-quintana et al., 2022). Their storytelling approach fosters audience engagement and brand trust (İrfan et al., 2022). Gaming influencers are highly interactive, building dedicated communities through live-streamed gameplay, reviews, and in-depth gaming content (Edwards et al., 2022). Educational and thought leadership influencers excel in long-form explainers, knowledge-sharing videos, and professional insights, benefiting from *YouTube*'s search-driven visibility and steady organic reach.

Content strategy

Content strategies on *YouTube* are built around in-depth engagement and educational value. Long-form videos and tutorials are favoured by the platform's algorithm, making them ideal for product demonstrations and brand storytelling (Lim et al., 2022). Live streaming and Q&A sessions facilitate real-time interactions, strengthening audience trust and community engagement. SEO-optimised titles and descriptions, incorporating relevant keywords, enhance content discoverability and ensure sustained visibility in search results (Haines et al., 2023).

Marketing advantages and challenges

YouTube offers numerous advantages, including the extended lifespan of its content compared to short-form platforms like *TikTok* and *Instagram* (Schwemmer & Ziewiecki, 2018). Its strong SEO presence enables videos to

reach audiences over time, ensuring sustainable content engagement (Pagan et al., 2021). High audience retention rates, particularly for educational and in-depth content, provide brands with long-term exposure and credibility (Coates et al., 2019).

However, *YouTube* also presents challenges. High-quality video production entails greater costs and effort compared to content creation on other platforms (Yetimoğlu & Uğurlu, 2020). Consistency in content uploads is crucial to maintaining visibility, as algorithm shifts can influence video recommendations and organic reach (Glatt, 2022). Brands and influencers must continuously adapt their content strategies to align with *YouTube*'s evolving platform dynamics (Reinikainen et al., 2020). By strategically partnering with *YouTube* influencers, brands can benefit from long-term engagement, strong storytelling capabilities, and consistent audience growth, making it an invaluable component of a comprehensive influencer marketing strategy.

Comparison of the platforms for influencer marketing

As the influencer marketing landscape becomes increasingly fragmented across digital platforms, it is crucial to synthesise platform-specific insights into a comparative perspective. While previous sections have explored each platform individually, focusing on influencer types, content strategies, and marketing dynamics, this section consolidates those findings to highlight the relative positioning and strategic functions of major platforms. The goal is to provide a holistic overview that enables marketers, researchers, and strategists to align influencer campaign design with platform-specific affordances and audience expectations.

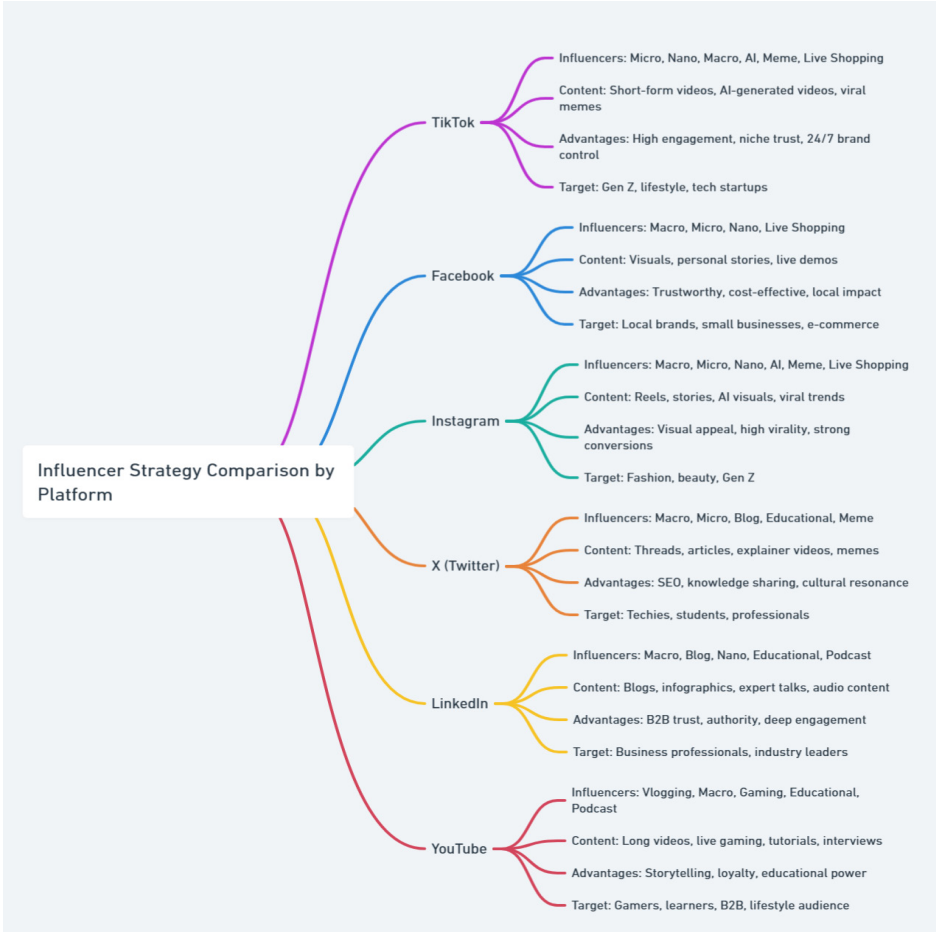
To complement the comparative visual analysis and deepen the understanding of influencer-platform alignment, the *Influencer Marketing Platforms and Strategies Matrix* summarises the most prominent influencer types, dominant content formats, marketing advantages, and key audience segments for each platform (*Table 1*). Synthesised from thematic findings referenced in previous sections, this matrix highlights how different social media environments shape influencer effectiveness through platform-specific affordances, user behaviours, and content strategies. It serves as a practical reference point for marketers aiming to align campaign goals with the distinctive strengths of each platform.

Table 1. Influencer marketing platforms and strategies matrix

Platform	Influencer Types	Content Formats	Marketing Advantages	Target Audiences
<i>TikTok</i>	Micro, Nano, Macro, AI, Meme, Live Shopping	Short-form videos, AI-generated content, humour, live sales	High engagement, viral reach, brand control	Gen Z, lifestyle enthusiasts, tech users, e-commerce shoppers
<i>Facebook</i>	Macro, Micro, Nano, Live Shopping	Visual content, personal storytelling, livestreams	Credibility, conversion, local reach	Broad audiences, small businesses, and local e-commerce
<i>Instagram</i>	Macro, Micro, Nano, AI, Meme, Live Shopping	Aesthetic visuals, Reels, AI content, livestreams	Balance of engagement and trust, viral marketing potential	Fashion, beauty, and youth demographics
<i>X (Twitter)</i>	Macro, Micro, Blog, Educational, Meme	Threaded tweets, blogs, explanatory videos	SEO impact, thought leadership, cultural resonance	Tech communities, researchers, and knowledge seekers
<i>LinkedIn</i>	Macro, Blog, Nano, Educational, Podcast	Blogs, infographics, and podcasts	B2B trust, authority building, long-term influence	Professionals, business sectors, and thought leaders
<i>YouTube</i>	Vloggers, Macro, Gamers, Educational, Podcast	Long-form videos, gaming streams, and interviews	Storytelling, audience loyalty, and industry-specific value delivery	Education, entertainment, tech users, B2B audiences

To further illustrate the comparative dynamics summarised in the table, the following visual map presents a platform-specific overview of influencer types, content strategies, marketing advantages, and target audiences (*Figure 1*). This figure, which summarises the study’s findings, provides a concise visual synthesis that supports strategic alignment in influencer selection and campaign planning across various social media ecosystems.

Figure 1. Influencer strategy comparison by platform



From a conceptual perspective, the effectiveness of influencer types across major social media platforms is powerfully shaped by each platform’s technical affordances, content dynamics, and user behaviours. *TikTok* stands out for democratising influence through its algorithm-driven content discovery, allowing nano and micro-influencers to compete with macro-influencers in terms of visibility and engagement. This can be explained by the principle of algorithmic curation, where content relevance and authenticity are prioritized over follower count. Platforms like *Instagram* similarly reward authenticity and visual storytelling; however, the saturation of branded content means that influencers must leverage personalised, immersive content formats to maintain trust and engagement. The success of meme and live shopping influencers on these visually driven platforms underscores the importance of rapid, participatory, and interactive content strategies, phenomena well explained by theories of viral diffusion and participatory culture.

In contrast, *Facebook's* performance dynamics reflect its strengths in community-building and long-form interaction. Macro-influencers benefit from the platform's broad reach and narrative affordances, while micro- and community-based influencers excel at fostering loyalty and organic advocacy through groups and live content. This aligns with social capital and relationship marketing theories, emphasising trust and community as drivers of engagement. *X*, on the other hand, is characterised by real-time dialogue and open network structure, which makes it uniquely suited for thought leadership, opinion leadership, and meme-driven virality. Here, micro-influencers and thought leaders are effective at cultivating niche conversations and setting the agenda. At the same time, macro-influencers contribute to broad dissemination—a pattern that supports the two-step flow model and agenda-setting theory.

LinkedIn's influencer ecosystem is driven by professional expertise, authority-building, and knowledge leadership. Macro and thought leadership influencers gain traction by leveraging status and content quality, while micro- and nano-influencers engage tightly knit professional networks. The effectiveness of these influencers is rooted in theories of knowledge transfer and professional trust, with educational and research-based content sustaining long-term engagement and industry authority. *YouTube's* distinctiveness lies in its support for in-depth storytelling, community building, and long-form engagement. Macro and vlogging influencers build loyal audiences through narrative persuasion and personality-driven content, while gaming, educational, and thought leadership influencers leverage the platform's search engine capabilities and participatory features. Here, narrative theory, parasocial interaction, and participatory culture frameworks explain why different influencer types thrive in content-rich, high-retention environments.

These comparative insights highlight that influencer marketing effectiveness depends not only on influencer type or follower count but also on the alignment between platform affordances, content strategy, audience expectations, and the underlying mechanisms of trust, authority, and engagement. This synthesis underscores the importance of adopting a platform-specific and theory-informed approach to influencer campaign design, enabling marketers and researchers to maximise both reach and relational impact in a highly fragmented digital landscape.

Discussion

Influencer marketing is an emerging and dynamic strategy that influences strategic decisions and necessitates changes in agency processes for successful execution (Childers et al., 2019). This study provides a comprehensive comparative analysis of influencer marketing dynamics across major social media platforms, directly addressing the research questions and situating the findings within a broader conceptual and practical framework.

Addressing *R.Q. 1*, the results indicate that platform-specific affordances and audience expectations have a significant influence on influencer effectiveness. Current research shows that no single influencer type or content format is universally superior; effectiveness depends on context, audience, and campaign goals (Mero et al., 2023; Park et al., 2021). Nano and micro-influencers demonstrate higher engagement rates on platforms like *TikTok* and *Instagram*, primarily due to their perceived authenticity and ability to foster community-based trust. In contrast, macro and thought leadership influencers excel on *LinkedIn* and *X*, leveraging their expertise and authority to drive professional discourse and set the agenda. AI-generated and meme influencers are emerging as impactful actors on visually and algorithmically driven platforms, such as *TikTok* and *Instagram*. However, their long-term effectiveness remains an open research question.

Content strategies differ across platforms, as each social media or digital channel has unique audience behaviours, engagement mechanisms, and content formats (Moran et al., 2020). For *R.Q.2*, the analysis reveals that short-form, interactive, and trend-driven content strategies are most effective on *TikTok* and *Instagram*, where algorithmic curation and entertainment value drive rapid engagement. On *Facebook*, a mix of long-form storytelling, community group interactions, and live video content enable both broad reach and deep audience engagement. *X* favours concise, real-time content and threaded discussions, supporting both viral trends and thought leadership. *LinkedIn* and *YouTube*, by contrast, prioritise long-form, educational, and knowledge-driven formats, which are more suitable for fostering professional trust and sustaining ongoing engagement.

Regarding *R.Q.3*, each platform presents unique marketing advantages and challenges (Rangaswamy et al., 2020; Stallkamp & Schotter, 2021; Veile et al., 2022). *TikTok* and *Instagram* offer high virality and engagement but require ongoing adaptation to rapidly shifting trends and algorithmic changes. *Facebook*'s advantage lies in community-building and multigenerational audience reach, yet it faces declining organic visibility. *X* is powerful for real-time interaction and trend participation, but has limited content longevity. *LinkedIn*'s B2B trust and professional influence are balanced by higher entry barriers for content creation. In contrast, *YouTube*'s long content lifespan is offset by greater production costs and the need for consistent quality.

Addressing *R.Q.4*, the comparative synthesis shows that no single influencer type or content format is universally superior; instead, effectiveness depends on alignment with platform culture, technical affordances, and audience behaviour (Kapitan et al., 2022). The interplay between influencer characteristics, content style, platform, and campaign goals proved to be effective. Short-form engagement is a prominent feature of *TikTok* and *Instagram*, while long-form thought leadership thrives on *LinkedIn* and *YouTube*. Community-based impact is most substantial on *Facebook* and *X*, and the integration

of AI and virtual influencers is expanding rapidly across visual-first platforms.

For *R.Q.5*, the findings underscore the importance of strategic alignment in influencer marketing. Marketers must select influencer types and content strategies that resonate with the platform's unique environment and user base. Success hinges on understanding not only the quantitative metrics of engagement but also the qualitative drivers of trust, authenticity, and community-dimensions that are shaped by platform-specific norms and technical features. Research highlights that successful influencer marketing increasingly depends on dynamic, multi-platform strategies that tailor content and influencer selection to the unique strengths and audience behaviours of each channel. Brands are advised to leverage platforms differently, as each offers distinct engagement mechanisms and content formats (Elliott, 2024; Mallipeddi et al., 2022).

Unexpected findings and theoretical contributions

One of the study's unexpected findings is the increasing influence of AI-generated and virtual influencers, especially on visually oriented and algorithm-driven platforms. While these actors offer scalability and novelty, their capacity to build genuine trust remains contested, raising new questions for both practice and theory. As studies suggest, AI influencers can be as effective as human influencers in generating word-of-mouth intentions but are generally perceived as less trustworthy; similarly, virtual influencers tend to be less effective than human influencers in creating positive brand attitudes due to perceived credibility deficits, although this effect disappears when rational language is used (Özdemir et al., 2023; Sands et al., 2022).

Another noteworthy result is the persistence of community-driven impact in an era of algorithmic personalisation; platforms like *Facebook* and *X* show that social capital and group identity continue to shape influencer effectiveness, complementing rather than replacing algorithmic logic. Studies show that integrating social network data into personalization systems enhances their effectiveness, as recommendations informed by users' communities and shared interests outperform those based solely on individual behaviour or self-customisation (Chung et al., 2016; Li & Zhang, 2020).

Limitations

Despite its comprehensive qualitative analysis, this study has several limitations. First, the exclusive reliance on secondary data may not fully capture real-time dynamics, shifts in sentiment, or platform updates. The findings are limited to what is documented in existing academic literature, which may lag behind rapidly evolving digital trends. Second, the absence of direct consumer feedback and real-time engagement metrics limits the ability to validate influ-

encer effectiveness from the audience's perspective. Third, the focus on six major platforms precludes detailed insights into emerging or niche platforms that may present different influencer marketing paradigms. Future research should address these gaps by incorporating primary data from influencer campaign performance, consumer surveys, and experimental case studies to validate and extend these findings in practice.

By synthesising platform-specific findings through a comparative and theory-informed lens, this study advances the understanding of how influencer types, content strategies, and platform affordances interact to shape marketing effectiveness. The results offer actionable insights for both scholars and practitioners, highlighting the importance of adaptive, platform-specific, and strategically aligned influencer marketing campaigns in a fragmented digital landscape.

Conclusion

This study comprehensively analyses influencer marketing strategies across six major social media platforms: *TikTok*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *X* (formerly *Twitter*), *LinkedIn*, and *YouTube*. By examining platform-specific influencer roles, content strategies, and engagement patterns, this research offers valuable insights into the unique strengths and challenges associated with influencer marketing on each platform.

Key findings suggest that platform-specific strategies are essential for optimising influencer marketing campaigns. While *TikTok* and *Instagram* exhibit high engagement rates, making them ideal for viral campaigns, platforms like *LinkedIn* and *YouTube* are better suited for long-form content and thought leadership. *Facebook*, despite its declining organic reach, remains an effective platform for community engagement and live shopping experiences. *X* (*Twitter*), with its real-time interaction capabilities, serves as an essential tool for brand announcements and industry discussions.

The study highlights the importance of aligning influencer types with platform-specific content strategies. For instance, micro- and nano-influencers excel on *TikTok* and *Instagram* due to their ability to foster authentic engagement. In contrast, macro influencers and thought leaders are more impactful on *LinkedIn* and *YouTube*, where professional expertise and long-form content drive audience retention.

For marketers, these findings emphasise the necessity of tailoring influencer marketing campaigns to platform-specific audience behaviours. Brands can enhance their return on investment by selecting the most effective influencer type and content format for each platform rather than applying a uniform approach across all channels. By recognising the distinct advantages of each platform, brands can create targeted, high-impact campaigns that resonate with their intended audience.

For researchers, this study opens venues for further exploration, particularly in emerging areas such as AI-generated influencers and community-driven marketing strategies on platforms like *Reddit* and *Discord*. Additionally, future research could focus on longitudinal studies to assess how the effectiveness of influencer marketing evolves in response to changes in platform algorithms and shifting consumer behaviour.

As influencer marketing continues to evolve, studies that incorporate real-time data, experimental designs, or mixed-method approaches could yield deeper insights into influencer effectiveness and consumer behaviour across different platforms. In this context, the study highlights the need for future research to explore AI-generated and virtual influencers, focusing on their impact on audience trust, brand perception, and the potential for long-term engagement. Cross-cultural and international comparative studies may help uncover how regional differences and cultural contexts shape influencer strategies and outcomes. There is a need for further research focusing on emerging or niche platforms to expand our understanding beyond the dominant social media environments analysed in this study. By addressing these gaps, future studies can further advance both the theoretical development and practical applications of influencer marketing in the digital ecosystem.

Influencer marketing is not a singular strategy but a diverse and platform-dependent practice. By leveraging data-driven insights and platform-specific influencer strategies, brands and marketers can maximise engagement, build brand credibility, and achieve sustainable business growth in the evolving digital landscape.

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